





Juanita S. Dilley
Clover Lick, W. Va.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 6 - Religion

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MOUNT ZION METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH-- In Hills

In the early 1800's the Methodist Episcopal church had three old log church buildings, Hamlin Chapel on Stony Creek, New Salem at Greenbank and Mt. Zion near Frost. There had of course been the little White Pole Church built by John McNeel but it had been discontinued after a short time, then there had been the Millstone Run Church built on lands of John Jordan in the 1820's but this church had been destroyed by fire.

Tradition is that old Mt. Zion was built in 1808 on the lands of Felix Grimes who settled in this community in 1770. Many of the people of the community have pictures of this old church on which is written "Old Mount Zion Church near Frost, West Virginia, built during the year 1835" and the people have accepted that as the date when it was built. No one knows just why that date is given as there are no records to show that it is correct unless it was in that year that people began to show an interest in repairing this old building. You will notice in the enclosed deed that reference is made to ^a house on the land Mrs. Alice Sharp of Frost, oldest living resident of the Zion community, tells me that she had heard John Wanless say that the old log building had been there, how long no one knew, but it had not been used for some time as a place of worship and in the 1820's a movement was made to repair it and make it into a place of worship for the Methodist Episcopal denomination. The deed

was given on September 6, 1836 by Charles Grimes (son of Felix) and Martha his wife, land consisting of two acres and 51 poles for the sum of \$5.00 to James Wanless, William Moore, John Wanless, James Grimes, John Sharp, Henry Arbogast, and John Waugh, trustees.

On November 20, 1848 in a report by the trustees, Martin Dilley, Washington Moore and Beverly Waugh, ~~they~~ state that the building is completed to the ceiling. That the cost of the church was about \$300. and that \$50. should finish it. In that same year, Preston Moore, Harvey Curry and Moses Moore were appointed trustees to fill vacancies which had occurred. This is a hewn log building, the cracks being daubed with mud. The roof was of shingles.

* Calvin Price says that such churches as Mt. Zion, Hamlin Chapel and New Salem were built as community churches and were used by every one regardless of denomination, and that no thought was given to procuring a deed for them until the Methodist Protestants withdrew from the Methodist church in 1830, then a scramble was made to get them deeded, perhaps so the M.P.'s could not lay claim to them.

* This old church originally had a gallery for the use of the slaves owned by the Dilley and Grimes families of the community, but this gallery was taken out fifty or sixty years ago, and no trace of it now remains.

& Samuel Waugh was one of the original members of old Mt. Zion church, one of the strongholds of its denomination for so many years. Beverly Waugh, son of Samuel, was an estimable man.

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He led the Mt. Zion class for 16 years, and yielded the position to the regret of his christian brethren when it became necessary for him to move to the Little Levels. At his death he left an honorable reputation as a gentleman and a christian. The Rev. John Waugh, another son of Samuel, is worthy of remembrance for many reasons. He was a skillful worker in metals, excelling in the manufacturing of hoes and tempering axes. He also taught school and preferred the vocal method. He studiously improved his limited opportunities for mental improvement, and became a well informed, intelligent citizen, and had his own well matured opinions about questions of public interest. He was for many years a prominent member of the Mt. Zion church and a local preacher that seems to have but little regard for what persons might say about his discourse. He had a parable about throwing stones in the dark at certain things, and if there was an outcry he knew that something was hit. {The same one referred to in the old Stewards Book.

& Jacob Waugh and Henry Arbogast were also local Methodist ministers of prominence. It was Lorenza Waugh, the brother of Jacob, who preached his way across the continent.

* Some of the class leaders after the Civil War were David Grimes, Morgan Grimes, Hanson Dilley and John W. Grimes.

Around 1850 the Moores, Herrings and Currys who had been members of Mt. Zion, built Mount Vernon church on Knappe Creek, and withdrew from Mt. Zion. This church was perhaps built more for convenience, rather than because of any dissatisfaction among the members.

* Also some time in the history of this church, the Wanless, Schroeder, and Fertig families of upper Thorny creek undertook to

build a church of their own. The logs in this church instead of being hewn were sawed on a saw mill owned by John Wanless, and were notched at the ends so that they fit closely together making it unnecessary to daub the cracks. It is not known just why these people built a church, but it is believed there had been no disagreement in the church, for when for some reason the Thorny Creek church was not completed, and was finally abandoned, the people returned to Mt. Zion where some of their descendants still worship. This log church on Thorny Creek, while not completed, was used for a number of years as a preaching place. John Wanless gave the logs to Jake Shrader and he used them to build his house. They are still to be found in the Shrader house. I could find no deed for this church, but it was built on land belonging to the Wanless family and is now owned by Joe Fertig. It was on the roadside, about one-fourth mile below Thorny Creek school house, and near where Wanless had his grist and saw mill. The place is still called Church hollow. No one knows when it was built, but some believe before the Civil War.

The Civil War broke out and the people of The Hills, as elsewhere, took sides; the Grimes and others remaining with the Union and the Dilley's, Shraders and Moores joining the confederacy. In the year of 1867 when a preacher by the name of Waugh, with some other Confederates, went to Mt. Zion to hold services they found the church locked and the Union men dressed in their blue uniforms stationed at various points around the church lot. they did not try to gain entrance to the church but preached from the steps, and finally withdrew and built Bethel church.

At one time while there was so much contention in the church a man by the name of Sharp shot through the door of the church. This door was replaced by a new one and Morgan Grimes took the old door with the bullet holes to his log cabin and for many years this old door remained a part of his house. It is still to be seen at the home of George Bambrick, a son in-law.

* Mount Tabor school house was at one time an outpost of Mount Zion church. There was quite a class of Methodists at this place.

* During the pastorate of Rev. Ramsey, the old church was materially repaired. The old shingle roof was replaced by a metal roof, and the old logs were covered over on the outside with a metal siding, some new sills were put in, new windows installed and it was painted on the inside. This metal siding that was put on the outside was painted red in the first place, and remained such until in 1954 when it was painted white.

In 1932, Strickler Hoover bought paint and painted the church again on the inside.

¶ Mt. Zion was at first on the Huntersville circuit, then when the churches divided and Mt. Zion remained with the north while Huntersville and other churches on the circuit went with the south, it was made an appointment on the Frost circuit, and from about 1920 to 1938 it was on the Arbovale circuit, but it has again become an appointment on the Huntersville circuit.

A Ladies Aid was organized in 1934 during the pastorate of Rev. I. E. Lewis, with Juanita Dilley as president. There were fifteen members. During that year this organization

worked very hard to build up the church. The women sponsored suppers, made comforts and just any thing they could find to make money for the church. They paid one-third of the preachers salary, bought paint to paint the outside of the church, the men contributed their time and did the painting, and everything was going along fine until the people began to lose faith in the preacher because they thought he did not walk the straight and narrow path. After a while some of the old and loyal, working members became so disgusted with the whole affair that they began one by one to leave the church and go to neighboring churches. Some of the members refused to carry on the work of the Ladies Aid, and the result of it all was that by 1930 there was not even a Sunday School, whereas in 1934 there had been an enrollment of near 75 in the Sunday School and much interest shown by every one. (During the period 1935 to 1937 feelings were almost as intense as in the reconstruction period following the Civil War). It will be many years before the church will be back to where it was before this disorganization took place. However, Mr. and Mrs. Emerson Newman, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Shrader, and others made an effort to reorganize the church, a Sunday School was organized and a new preacher was sent to take charge of the circuit.

There is being put forth an effort to again unite Mt. Zion and Bethel churches. The preacher has services at Mt. Zion one appointment and at Bethel the next. They have Sunday School at one church one Sunday and at the other the next. However, some of the people have for many years attended both churches, but neither of them want to entirely give up their church and

the arrangement of keeping both churches and alternating the services has worked very well so far. (These churches are about two miles apart).

Some of the most faithful members of this church from 1925 to 1935 were; Oda Gay, Pearl Gay, Myrtle Fertig, Bertha Fertig, Ona Fertig, Amos Fertig, George Fertig, Florence Fertig, Mantie Bambrick, John Grimes, Charles K. Moore, Mattie Humes, Pat Houdyshell, Effie Houdyshell, and A. J. Hoover, with Oda Gay, Bertha Fertig and John Grimes as class leaders.

The history of Mt. Zion has been along and stormy one, but in spite of a few major disagreement, this old church has been the scene of many old time revival meetings and many people can look back on it as great place of worship. When the churches were united there was some talk of discontinuing Mt. Zion, some even wanted to tear it down, but some one got more than a hundred signers on a petition to keep the old church as a landmark. It is believed to be the oldest church in the county, that still stands and is still used. There is some talk of removing the metal covering from the outside and restoring it to its original state.

Mrs. Laura Grimes is collecting money to put a new fence around the church lot and surrounding cemetery that is the resting place of so many of the old pioneers of this community.

church records.
& Prices History.

I lived in this community for six years and knew personally the history of the church during that time and learned much of its past history.

* From -Calvin Price, Alice Sharp,
W. A. Dilley, Lizzie Waugh,
G. M. Sharp, Laura Grimes,
Fred Fertig, C. K. Moore
Mattie Bambrick